

# Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter

Volume 30:1 February 2019

### President's Message

Waiting for spring. That pretty much sums up our lives at the moment. Not quite winter, but definitely not yet spring. Yet the first signs are there, out of our so-far soft winter. The snowdrops are in bloom. I saw crocuses up today, and the hellebores are raising their bowed heads. The scent of the demure *Sarcococca* drifts through the air, a sharp contrast between a plain looking shrub and the intense fragrance it emits. *Rhododendron* 'Christmas Cheer' (or is it *R.* 'Rosamundi', I can never tell) is showing the pink tips of its buds; it will be in full flower soon.

So inspired by the beauty yet to come, I have been succumbing to the allure of the **Seed Catalogues**.



*Arisaema triphyllum*

### Expert Panel

Wed, Feb 6 @ 7:30pm

(More details on page 3)

### In This Issue:

Letter from the Editor 5

Rhododendron 'Cynthia' 7

Using Arborist Wood Chips as  
Landscape Mulch 9

Early Season Plant Nutrients 14

Member Profile: Carrie Nelson 15

Legendary Enchanted Evenings  
CVRS Christmas Parties 17

Spring is Happening in  
Member's Gardens 20

Calendar of Upcoming Events 21

Useful Links 22

CVRS Library/Book Club News 23

Rhododendron Species Founda-  
tion Spring 2019 Sale 23

2018-19 Executive 24

I emphasize those two words for a reason. Within those pages, lives such a world of promise and beauty that bears a portent much deeper than to which the words and images give meaning. Those tiny seeds represent our hopes for the garden, a veritable Eden lost to mankind, an intensity of beauty that we foolishly believe we can restore to the world in our own small holding.

I reached this state of rapture just going through the Heirloom tomato seed listing of an online catalogue (Canadian Heritage Harvest seeds); it was fabulous.

We experience a greater connection to a plant that we have grown from seed.

We, of course, have our share of heartbreak and disappointment---there are the seeds that don't germinate, that the birds have eaten, that germinate and then struggle for a few months only to die at that point. It is a constant struggle. But how sweet it is when they do succeed; we watch them grow, and repot them, and then one triumphant day we put them into the ground.

Occasionally, we discover we have been harbouring a cuckoo in our horticultural nest, and the confident label on seed packet was in fact a blatant falsehood. I have several *Callistemons* proudly



***Callistemon***



***Rhododendron stenophyllum***

growing along a warm wall, that arrived in a seed packet claiming to be *Rhododendron stenophyllum*. I love them anyway.

Growing from seed allows us to grow a wider, or a more specialist's, range of material than may be available locally. The Internet has given us access to an unimaginable scope of material, unthinkable a few decades ago. I have been immersed in South America lately, salivating over plants from a website *Brazilplants*, and I am pretty sure I can grow some of them. *Chileflora*, is another informative website with seeds from, yes, Chile. *Arisaemas* are relatively easy from seed and would provide a grouping, as opposed to a single specimen, that would dovetail with your rhododendrons seamlessly. The list goes on, and I for one am glad it does. I have never tired of the seed process at any point during my entire horticultural career, and, I would hope, neither will you.

Growing from seed is an act of faith.

I believe,

**Barrie Agar, President**



## First CVRS Meeting of 2019!

# Experts Ready for Tough Questions at Next Wednesday's Meeting

**February 6 at 7:30 pm**

---

Al Campbell, our own rhododendron specialist, has put together an expert panel to lead discussions and respond to questions about "Growing and Caring for Rhododendrons". Come to our February meeting prepared with all of your queries.

If you wish, forward your questions via email to Al Campbell prior to the meeting and he will pose the questions for you.

Don't miss this great opportunity to take advantage of the skills and experience of these gurus!

## EXPERT PANEL

### Ken Webb

Ken is the ARS Western Vice President and an experienced propagator, specializing in Jim Barlup rhododendrons. He offers a vast knowledge of rhododendrons, propagation, and the American Rhododendron Society. Ken and Madeline's garden is located in Saanich, on Vancouver Island. Apart from developing their beautiful garden, Ken and Madeleine have propagated enough plants to adorn the Saanich Peninsula, as well as a broad sweep of Vancouver Island with rhododendrons. The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society has often been the beneficiary of his largesse. We are most fortunate to have his expertise available to us.



## Roy Blackmore

Roy is a long time member of the Victoria Rhododendron Society and an associate member of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society. He and his wife Lois created a beautiful home and large Rhododendron Garden high up on Triangle Mountain. The mature rhododendrons were planted in the garden many years ago and the planting has never stopped. They grow a large number of hybrids rhododendrons developed by Jim Barlup, in large colourful pots arranged throughout the garden and on the large wrap around patios. His expertise on growing rhododendrons in pots will be available to us.



## Sean Rafferty

Sean is President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, and an expert on rhododendron species. He has accompanied plant hunters on numerous expeditions around the world, and actively supports the preservation of species rhododendrons in critical regions of the world. He is an avid proponent of ongoing developments of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. Sean and Brenda Macdonald are creating a rhododendron paradise, featuring a large variety of species rhododendrons, on their property in Shirley, on Vancouver Island.



*Rhododendron kesangiae*, photographed at the Rhododendron Species Foundation Convention in Federal Way, Washington, is one of the hardiest large leaf rhododendron species.

Photo: Verna Buhler

# Letter *from the Editor*



Hi Friends,

I am looking forward to seeing you all again after this long drought that has left me parched for garden enthusiasm. Can you believe how fortunate we are to have January days like that? The weather has been gentle enough in January to allow us to spend some time outside to clean up and mulch. **Although I look forward to spring, and marvel at the sprouting of brave new growth, I love the winter months.**



When our *Cymbidium* (Orchidaceae) accidentally began blooming in George's cool greenhouse a few weeks ago, we brought it inside to enjoy its beauty

In this issue, we look back briefly to our wonderful celebration early in December. We learn a little more about a most deserving fellow member of our club, Carrie, who received the Silver Bowl Award at the Christmas Party. Liz Murray presents us with an article on Ladysmith's great *Rhododendron* 'Cynthia'.

Thank-you to Ian Efford and Alan Campbell, who both recommended that our newsletter share with fellow members an article about mulching, that may counter our previously held understanding on the topic. The author, Linda Chalker-Scott was one of the presenters at last October's "Fall into Gardening" event co-hosted by the NRS and MARS. Some of our fellow members were able to attend but a fair number of us were unable to do so. With her permission, we are reprinting one of the articles that she recommended. She also suggested that her website might offer useful information <https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>.

It definitely does; in fact, I went right out and began testing some of what I learned about mulching on the very next warm day. As soon as you have an opportunity, you may wish to visit the site and spend a few hours learning!



Thank you to Janet who shares with us the blooms in her winter garden on Saltspring Island. One rhododendron in the Locomotive Park in Chemainus is blooming but I do not think that *Rhododendron* 'Lee's Scarlet' that grows there is in bloom at this time.

Thanks to all of you for your contributions.

Verna



Just one hike on Mount Tzouhalem during the winter months offers a spectacular array of visual gifts from Nature, along with crisp ozone-rich air



## Happy New Year CVRS Members!

It has been my pleasure to provide your club with newsletter and website design services for the past 8 years. The first newsletter I designed for the CVRS was in April of 2011. I've enjoyed working with you and look forward to many more issues! The work for the club gave me the confidence and inspiration to start my own website design business ..... ML Media Design which I launched in October 2018.

Thank you, CVRS, for your business!

Mary-Lynn Boxem



# RHODODENDRON 'CYNTHIA'

By Liz Murray

*On December 20, 2018 a hurricane wind, with gusts of over 100 mph. ripped through the East side of Vancouver Island pushing down everything that it could in its path. Many trees, as well as buildings, were lost to the forces of the wind. Trees fell on houses, vehicles, and a tent killing one person inside.*



**Rhododendron 'Cynthia' with Peter Lewis and his young puppy, Bohhdi, in April 2017**  
Photo submitted by Peter Lewis

While we were cleaning up damage in our own gardens we heard that a beloved rhododendron was severely damaged by the wind. The *Rhododendron* 'Cynthia', affectionately called Lady Cynthia by her owners Peter and Lesley Richmond was hurt. Cynthia is over 115 years old and has stood overlooking the water from high up the hill in Ladysmith. When last measured she was 9 meters high and 8 meters across. In 2018, it was estimated that she had over 5,000 pink blossoms. She could have come from a cutting taken in Beacon Hill Park or perhaps she sailed here from England as a wee little plant.

The website [Bored Panda](#) rated Cynthia as one of the most beautiful "trees" in the world. She is a hybrid plant, a cross between two species, *Rhododendron catawbiense* x *Rhododendron griffithianum*. This hybrid grows approximately 6 feet in 10 years and tolerates both heat and sun.

The Richmond's, who had only owned the property where 115-year-old Cynthia resided for about one year, felt terrible about the damage that she sustained. They were devastated by the loss of many of her beautiful branches but determined that they would do the best they could to rescue what was left of her. Peter contacted a few people to see if he could get consensus as to what would be the best course of action to preserve this beautiful rhododendron for the future.

He contacted Lois Blackmore, past president of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. Lois gave him contact information for several people that she felt would have enough expertise to help him to decide what could be done to give this rhododendron its best chance.



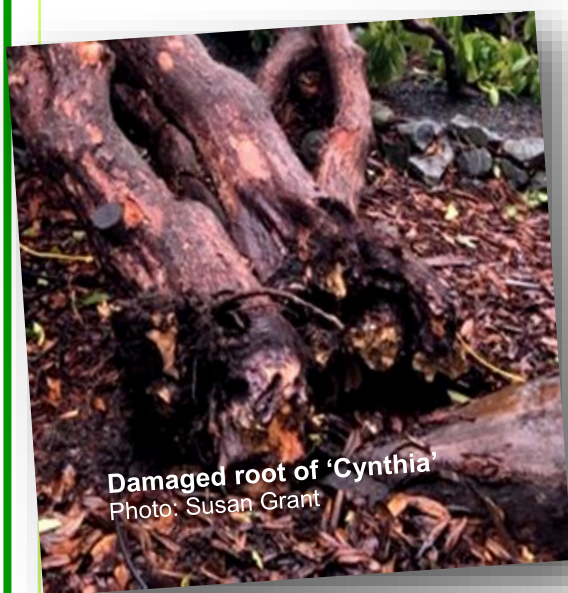
**Damaged section of R. 'Cynthia'** Photo: Susan Grant



On January 3, 2019 a group of rhododendron experts converged onto the Richmond property. In pouring rain, Sean Rafferty, Roy Blackmore, and Ken Webb from the Victoria Rhododendron Society; Allan Murray, from the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society; Chris Southwick from the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society; and Garth Wedemire and Sue Grant from the North Island Rhododendron Society gathered to examine *Rhododendron* 'Cynthia'.



**Island experts gathering to assess the damage**  
Photo: Garth Wedemire



**Damaged root of 'Cynthia'**  
Photo: Susan Grant

All of these people are members of the American Rhododendron Society. The American Rhododendron Society is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to encourage interest in and to disseminate information about the genus *Rhododendron*. Members' experiences range from novice to expert. Society activities include public education, plant sales, flower shows, seed exchanges and scientific research.



**Thorough examination of 'Cynthia's' situation**  
Photo: Garth Wedemire

The ARS members examined the broken 'Cynthia' and determined that the big girl had actually lost the back roots, which had over time become rotten. This storm had the strength to topple the weakened side. The front side had strong roots and two huge branches. It was decided that the strong branches could be cut to the six foot level to allow new growth to rise from there.



**Lady Cynthia's healthy section**  
Photo: Garth Wedemire

Peter Richmond said that a horticulturalist had given him the same advice, and he would look into having a professional do the work for them. Several members took some cuttings to grow in their propagators in hopes that they could produce some duplicates of this wonderful rhododendron.

The experts, pleased with the consensus and happy that 'Cynthia' was not gone were treated to tea, coffee and goodies and given a chance to warm up before they headed back to their corners of the Island.

*On a personal note, I wonder if my grandfather enjoyed this rhododendron. He was a coal miner who lived in Ladysmith before 1919, and spent time there in the 1930's. I am sure he would have noticed her up on the hill.*

*Liz Murray*



# Using Arborist Wood Chips as Landscape Mulch

*By Linda Chalker-Scott, Washington State University  
Puyallup Research and Extension Center.*

Landscape mulches are important components of environmentally sustainable gardens and landscapes. Unlike soil amendments, mulches are simply materials laid on top of the soil rather than worked into it. Select the right mulch and you reap the benefits of healthier soils and plants; choose the wrong mulch and the only plants that thrive are the weeds. This fact sheet teaches home gardeners how to use arborist wood chip mulches in their landscapes.



Figure 1 Arborist wood chips are often available free of charge

## Benefits of Arborist Wood Chips

In areas where trees are a dominant feature of the landscape, arborist wood chips are one of the best mulch choices for trees and shrubs. Studies have found wood chips to be one of the best performers in terms of moisture retention, temperature moderation, weed control, and sustainability. In many urban areas, arborist wood chips are available free of charge (Figure 1), making them one of the most economically practical choices. Unlike uniformly textured sawdust and bark mulches (Figure 2a),

arborist wood chips include bark, wood, and often leaves (Figure 2b). The chemical and physical diversity of these materials resists the compaction often found in sawdust and bark mulches. Additionally, the materials vary in their size and decomposition rate, creating a more diverse environment that houses a diversity of microbes, insects and other organisms. A biologically diverse soil community is more resistant to environmental disturbance and will in turn support a diverse and healthy plant population.



Figure 2a Bark mulch. Figure 2b Arborist wood chips create a diverse environment for plants.





Figure 3. Few weeds can survive in correctly applied wood chip mulches.

Wood chips are considered to be slow decomposers, as their tissues are rich in lignin, suberin, tannins, and other complex natural compounds. Thus, wood chips supply nutrients slowly to the system; at the same time they absorb significant amounts of water that is slowly released to the soil. It is not surprising that wood chips have been cited as superior mulches for enhanced plant productivity. Wood chips have been especially effective in helping establish trees and native plants in urban and disturbed environments. Arborist wood chips provide substantial weed control in ornamental landscapes (Figure 3). The mechanism(s) by which wood chips prevent weed growth are not fully understood, but likely includes light reduction (preventing germination of some seeds and reducing photosynthetic ability of buried leaves), allelopathy (inhibiting seed germination), and reduced nitrogen levels at the soil-mulch interface (reducing seedling survival).

While there are imported wood mulches available for purchase at nurseries and home improvement centers, they are not as cost effective as locally produced wood chips, which are often free. In a society where using locally produced materials are increasingly popular as a measure of sustainability, arborist wood chips are a natural choice. Finally, the reuse of plant materials as mulches keeps them out of the landfill – a benefit with both economic and environmental attributes.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Arborist Wood Chips

*Q: Will woody mulch acidify my soils?*

A: No. In field situations it is difficult to significantly alter soil pH without the addition of chemicals. Temporary changes in pH may be found in the decomposing mulch layer itself, but these have little effect on underlying soils. Significant changes in soil pH can only occur after decades or centuries of mulch use.



Figure 4. Fungal hyphae in a wood chip mulch

*Q: Don't woody mulches, like cedar, leach allelopathic chemicals that kill other plants?*

A: No. Many living, growing woody plants contain allelopathic chemicals, which can prevent seeds from germinating or kill young seedlings. Most compounds have no effect upon established plants. Cedars (*Thuja* spp.) have not been found to have this ability. Even *Juglans nigra* (black walnut), the best known allelopathic species, has not been shown to have negative effects when wood chips are used as a mulch.



*Q: Will mulches made from diseased trees infect healthy trees?*

*A:* No. Most studies indicate that diseased mulch cannot transmit pathogens to the roots of healthy trees. Under no circumstances should wood mulch be worked into the soil as an amendment: not only is this a poor planting practice, but increases the likelihood of disease transfer. Using diseased wood chips as a soil amendment puts them into close proximity to roots where subsequent tissue injury or environmental stress could lead to infection.

Fungal communities found in wood chip mulches are generally decomposers, not pathogens. Under healthy soil conditions, beneficial and harmless fungi (Figure 4) can outcompete pathogens for space on plant roots that grow into mulch layers. Furthermore, healthy plants are not susceptible to opportunistic pathogens such as *Armillaria* and *Phytophthora*, which are widespread, but inactive in well-managed soils.



**Figure 6.** Plants mulched with wood chips do not have nitrogen deficiencies.



**Figure 5.** Fine textured mulch like sawdust holds very little water and burns easily.

*Q: Aren't wood chips a fire hazard?*

*A:* No. Coarse textured organic mulches, like wood chips, are the least flammable of the organic mulches. Fine textured mulches are more likely to combust (Figure 5), and rubber mulch is the most hazardous of all tested landscape mulches. If organic mulches are kept moist, they are less likely to catch fire. If you use flamers for weed control in areas near wood chips, be sure to soak the mulched area first.

*Q: Won't wood chip mulches tie up nitrogen and cause nutrient deficiencies in plants?*

*A:* No. Many studies have demonstrated that over time woody mulch materials will increase nutrient



**Figure 7.** Mowing undesirable plants before mulching keeps soils undisturbed and reduces regrowth.



levels in soils and/or associated plant foliage (Figure 6). However, there is a nitrogen deficiency at the boundary between the mulch and soil, which probably inhibits weed seed germination.

*Q: Will woody mulches attract termites, carpenter ants, and other pests?*

*A:* No. Many wood-based mulches are not attractive to pest insects but are actually insect repellent. For instance, cedar (*Thuja*) species produce thujone, which repels clothes moths, cockroaches, termites, carpet beetles, Argentine ants, and odorous house ants. In general, termites prefer higher nutrient woody materials such as cardboard, rather than wood chips.



Figure 8. A layer of compost underneath coarse wood chips adds extra nutrients

## Action List for Using Arborist Wood Chip Mulches in the Landscape

**Begin mulch application before annual weeds are established.** Mulch is most effective in suppressing weeds before weed seeds germinate. Therefore, bare soil should be mulched as soon as practical, especially in the spring and fall when weed seed germination is at its peak. If this is not possible, the most effective, non-chemical way to remove weeds prior to mulching is to mow them as close to the ground as possible, followed immediately by mulching.



Figure 9. When mulch layers are too thin, weeds will grow rapidly

### Prune or mow perennial weeds at the root crown.

This is best done in early spring when root resources are lowest; generally just as leaf growth begins (Figure 7). Extensive pulling of perennial weeds from unprotected soil is not recommended, as this disturbance will destroy soil structure and increase erosion, especially in sandy soils or in sloped areas. It is better to keep unprotected soil undisturbed. However, you can pull resprouting perennial weeds in landscaped areas covered in mulch; the mulch layer prevents erosion and facilitates pulling.

**Remove particularly aggressive weeds from the site.** Weeds that easily go to seed or can reroot themselves after they've been dislodged should be composted or disposed with green waste materials.

**Add a thin underlayer of compost.** Before installing wood chips for the first time, create a thin underlying layer of a more nutrient-rich mulch (like compost, Figure 8) if there are concerns about nutrient deficiencies. This "mulch sandwich" approach is a logical one that mimics what you would see in the mulch layer of a forest ecosystem. It's not required, though, and over time a wood chip mulch will develop this same structure as the lower layers break down.

Use fresh chips unless there are still concerns about disease. Some of the nutrient value (particularly nitrogen, if the chips contain leaves or needles) will



be lost in the composting process. Using fresh chips ensures that some of the foliar nitrogen will feed the landscape rather than the compost pile. Install chips to the desired depth. A successful wood chip mulch must be deep enough to suppress weeds and promote healthy soils and plants: research has demonstrated that weed control is directly linked to mulch depth, as is enhanced plant performance. A review of the research on coarse organic mulches and weed control reveals that shallow mulch layers will enhance, rather than prevent weed growth (Figure 9). All plants, including weeds, respond positively to the benefits of organic mulches, particularly the increase in soil water retention. Wood chips maintained at a depth of 4 to 6 inches will control weeds without detracting from appearances.

**Keep mulch away from trunks of trees and shrubs.** Piling mulch against the trunks of shrubs and trees creates a dark, moist, low oxygen environment to which above-ground tissues are not adapted. Fungal diseases require a moist environment to grow and reproduce; piling mulch on the trunk provides exactly the right conditions for fungi to enter the plant.

Likewise, opportunistic pests are more likely to invade a plant whose bark is wet due to excessive mulching. Rather than creating mulch volcanoes (Figure 10), instead, taper the mulch down to nearly nothing as you approach the trunk. This donut-shaped application will protect the soil environment as well as the above-ground plant tissues.

**Keep mulch away from building foundations.** Although wood chips do not attract termites or other pests, they and other mulches can act as a bridge allowing pest insects to enter houses and garages. Maintain a narrow strip of bare soil next to the foundation to prevent infestations.

**Reapply mulch as needed to maintain desired depth; replacement rate will depend on decomposition rate.** Once mulch is applied, little



Figure 10. Mulch volcanoes may enhance pest and disease problems.

management needs to be done other than reapplication to maintain minimum depth. High traffic areas are most likely to need replacement.

## Further Reading

Bell, N., D.M. Sullivan, and T. Cook. 2009. Mulching woody ornamentals with organic materials. Oregon State University EC1629-E.

Chalker-Scott, L. 2007. Impact of mulches on landscape plants and the environment – a review. *Journal of Environmental Horticulture* 25(4): 239-249.

# EARLY SEASON PLANT NUTRIENTS

## AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR

Both Al Campbell and Sean Rafferty offer their rhododendrons a mixture of **MgSO<sub>4</sub>**, magnesium sulphate, (Epsom salts),

Then, a little later in March, Al adds a little fertilizer, using '**Al Murray's Mix**'.

### Epsom Salts:

Sean Rafferty mixes a handful of **Epsom salts** and a tablespoon (approx.) of **chelated iron** (*chelated* meaning that it will dissolve in water) into a two-gallon watering can and applies this at this time of the year.

The Epsom salts will increase the pH level of the soil and help roots absorb nutrients more easily.

The Mg ion helps leaves create chlorophyll for photosynthesis.

### If you prefer organic fertilizer to chemical:

Alan Murray has the answer for you with his special formula, which one can see has proven to be very effective in his mountainside garden in the Duncan area.

#### Al Murray's Mix:

4 parts each of alfalfa meal, canola meal, and blood meal. . .plus

2 parts dolomite lime. . .and

1 part each of rock phosphate, bone meal, kelp meal, and greensand

**Apply this mixture only ONCE A YEAR!!**

### Before you prune Rhododendrons:

Two of many other tips from Ken Cox's book, *Woodland Gardening*

- Some rhododendrons don't respond well to pruning. These include subsections Falconera and Grandia, and rhododendrons with smooth bark such as *R. barbatum*, *R. griffithianum* and their hybrids.
- Unhealthy plants suffering from poor drainage, drought or disease are less likely to respond to pruning than healthy, vigorous plants.



## Member Profile

**Carrie Nelson**

*Submitted by Sharon Tillie*



No matter the weather, rain, snow, sleet or sun, you will find Carrie somewhere in her massive Baldy Mountain hilltop garden, planting, weeding, digging or pruning, her floppy hat covering a mass of silver curls.

Those same silver curls named her very busy retirement activity: Silver Sage Nursery took shape fulfilling a life long passion for plants, coming shortly after a long and successful career at Malaspina College (now Vancouver Island University)



**Always enthusiastic and participatory, Carrie dresses in theme as she leads the events at a CVRS Summer Picnic in June 2016**



**Carrie's efforts as a strong, hardworking and organized CVRS President, influenced the ongoing growth and development of the annual Garden Fair**

Upon retirement, her first bold action was to commission the building of a 2000 square foot greenhouse and commence seeding, growing and selling specialty plants. Her love of Japanese Maples, rhododendrons, exotic plants and trees (the ones that are difficult to grow) being some of her favourites.



**Carrie enjoys the awards presentations at the CVRS Summer Picnic, in June 2015**

Former President Sandra Stevenson said of Carrie, "Her enthusiasm, her willingness to help, her professionalism, her competency and her sense of humour are just a few of the characteristics that we use to describe Carrie, and it is our great pleasure to recognize her with the presentation of this beautiful Silver Bowl."

Never one to sit still, Carrie along with husband Richard can be found building their little cottage, travelling to various parts of the world, or playing with their four grandchildren. And on occasion, Carrie may slip away with her paintbrush and canvas to catch the nuances of the plants she so loves.

Of course, the expertise of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society members helped to sharpen her interest in the rhododendron genus and inspired her to join the society, which soon led to her becoming an active and committed member. She served as Membership Chair, on the CVRS Executive and became CVRS President for a number of terms.

At the annual Christmas party, in December 2018, Carrie was awarded the Silver Bowl, which recognized her exemplary service and dedication to the efforts of CVRS in the ongoing development and preservation of the genus Rhododendron.



**Carrie, friendly and appreciative of fellow rhododendron enthusiasts, engages in lively conversations at the Summer Picnic 2017 in Siggi and Maria's garden**



**Multi-talented, Carrie shares the winners' podium for the wildest of the taletellers in the Annual Tall-Tales Contest at the CVRS Christmas Party in December 2017**



# Legendary Enchanted Evenings

*Also Known As*

## CVRS Christmas Parties

In early December 2018, fun-loving participants at the CVRS Christmas Party gathered around the old granite fireplace in the intimate dining hall of the McLay Guest House.

Chatter rose easily as guests shuffled items to squeeze more feast-offerings onto the already stacked banquet table. With spirits in hand, guests embraced as long lost friends, told of their recent exploits, and **flipped through albums discovered in storage---archives of the founding CVRS members and their gardens.**

When Ian began wandering about selling tickets, they drifted toward the display of gifts, pre-selecting the cups into which they would drop their tickets.

**Multiple arm-lengths of tickets were sold and split and dropped into the draw bucket in preparation for the Salvation Army Christmas Charity gift draw.**

Chaos erupted, however, when several experienced folk at one of the tables refused to part with either half of their tickets as they explained the format to newer members.



If they were wrong, they argued, why the candy-cane-red cups in front of each gift on display?

There was just cause for the confusion and a “committee” randomly self-assembled. Other guests knew why they had attended the party; they simply relaxed and left the problem solving to others.

**A complex solution emerged via a brainstorming session of doctorate minds, ultimately ensuring that each guest would leave with a treasure, whether small or hefty. The party could continue.**

Because the head table in front of the bay window seat had been used to display the photos for the **Annual Photo Contest**, guests were asked to drop their four quarters into the candy-cane-red cups beside their photo choices before the feasting could begin. Again jostling, chatter, and lending of quarters eventually settled to the point where the winning photo could be declared. The winning photo depicted foliage and colour contrasts particularly beautiful in late evening light, layers that Ali Morris had artistically created in one area of her garden.





As the photos were cleared and collected for display at the Spring Garden Sale, the hungriest of guests quickly assisted in restoring the head table, so the tasting could begin.

Having carefully selected from banquet tables, guests tucked shoulder to shoulder at round tables to dine. Following scrumptious mouthfuls of sweet tarts, pastries, pies and berries, guests topped up their beverages, and leaned back, satisfied and ready for some laughs; it was time for the **ancient oral tradition that usually took place during feasts and other gatherings.**

- **Tall tales, a humorous story that tells about exaggerated or impossible events, were often most popular.**
- **Expressions of one's life, customs, beliefs, and values through speech passed on through generations would evolve and transform in the re-telling.**

This year the list of tale-tellers was rich, the tales diverse and hilarious; so intense was the competition, in fact, that the applause meter malfunctioned, and no clear winner could be determined. The top prizes simply had to be shared.

Another enjoyable event at the Christmas Party each year is the **awarding of the Silver Bowl to a deserving member in the club.** Sandra and Barrie enthusiastically presented this award to Carrie Nelson. Evidently, Carrie was taken by surprise to the point where she was uncharacteristically searching for words for a few moments.

Lastly, came the dispersal of gifts, **the pleasure of giving and receiving inherent in the spirit of Christmas.** Tickets came out of pockets and purses and were strung around necks or stretched out on the tables in anticipation.

Everyone left with a treasure---one gentleman proudly sporting his gift ---a gently pink scarf. Smiles and laughter and cheerful wishes followed guests as they left.

And so, until February 2019 . . .



# SPRING IS HAPPENING

## IN MEMBER'S GARDENS



Janice McLean sent photos of her very early Rhododendron 'Lee's Scarlet' the same plants from which she cut a truss that she brought to the December Christmas Party. "These older plants started blooming in late October and just keep opening more buds to look even more fabulous. If there is a cold snap the existing blooms turn to mush – but then more open. This year is the best ever . . . We definitely believe the rhododendrons to be 'Lee's Scarlet' and 'Nobleanum Venustum'.



***Rhododendron 'Lee's Scarlet'***  
Above Photos: Janet McLean



***Rhododendron 'Nobleanum Venustum'***  
Photo: Janet McLean



# Calendar of Upcoming Events



## CVRS MONTHLY MEETING SPEAKER LIST

**Wednesday, February 7, 2019; 7:30 pm**  
CVRS Expert Panel: Ken Webb, Sean Rafferty,  
and Roy Blackmore

**Wednesday, March 6, 2019; 7:30 pm**  
Lloyd Gilmore

**March 13 - 18, 2019**  
Jonny Larsen Special Presentations and Events

**Wednesday, April 3, 2019**  
Garth Wedemire and Sean  
Rafferty's Wales Journey

**Wednesday, May 1, 2019**  
Barrie Agar, Ireland

### **Sunday, February 3, 2019**

Milner Gardens and Woodland: Spring Sunday openings begin

### **Wednesday, February 5, 2019**

Expert Panel - CVRS Monthly Meeting

### **Saturday, February 9 at 10am: Scott Wiskerke**

**Follow-up Pruning Demonstration at Kiesers'** (Turn off Metral to Doumont Road. Follow Doumont Road past the Black Bear Pub for 300 m, & turn right onto Pearce Road. Follow the potholes on Pearce Road for 300 m. Take the driveway on the left, through the gate, past the barn and you will have arrived at Dorothee's: 6299 Pearce Road)

Scott Wiskerke moved to Vancouver Island in the fall of 1990 and studied horticulture at VIU. After graduating, he leased Westwood Orchard in Nanaimo for 1 year and continued leasing other local orchards for the next 8 years as well as starting his own orchard in Cassidy. He also began residential pruning. In 2004, with no more orchard responsibilities, Scott began "Roots and Shoots", focusing on residential pruning. He has considerable experience pruning all types of ornamental trees, shrubs, fruiting trees, vines, berries, and conifers. When pruning, his focus is on promoting flowering and fruiting, while establishing a healthy form within the overall landscape.

### **Thursday, February 14, 2019**

Sue Grant and Garth Wedemire "*Gardens of Wales Tour*" Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Meeting

### **Thursday, March 14, 2019**

Ole Jonny Larsen – all the way from Norway "*Growing Rhododendrons in Scandinavia*" Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Meeting

## CVRS BOOK CLUB MEETING

Thursday, March 14, 2019 2pm at the CVRS Library; 3908 Cowichan Lake Road

Please open the gate and drive right in. The gate is there only to keep dogs in and deer out --- never our friends! Coffee and snacks are provided.

PLEASE NOTE: This date may need to be changed once more information regarding the “Jonny Larsen” presentation times and dates are available.

### April 5 – 6, 2019

The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society Annual Spring Flower Show (Cadboro Bay United Church, Victoria [www.virags.com](http://www.virags.com))

### Thursday, April 11, 2019

Margot Moser “*Native Plants*” Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Meeting

### Thursday, May 9, 2019,

Graham Sakaki – Research and Community Engagement Coordinator for the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI).  
“*Mt Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve and Milner Phenology Project*” (Nanaimo Rhododendron Society)

### Seedy Saturdays:

#### February 2

10:00 to 15:30, QB Civic Center,  
“Seeding the Future”

#### February 16

10:00 to 16:30, Victoria Conference Center

#### February 23

Tofino Botanical Gardens

#### March 2

10:00 to 15:00, Comox Valley at the Florence Filberg Center

#### March 23

10:00 to 14:00, Campbell River Community Center

[www.seeds.ca](http://www.seeds.ca)

### Useful Links:

Cowichan Rhododendron Society:  
[cowichanrhodos.ca/](http://cowichanrhodos.ca/)

Victoria Rhododendron Society:  
[victoriarhodo.ca/index.html](http://victoriarhodo.ca/index.html)

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society:  
[marsrhodos.ca/](http://marsrhodos.ca/)

North Island Rhododendron Society:  
[nirsrhodos.ca/ws/](http://nirsrhodos.ca/ws/)

The American Rhododendron Society:  
[rhododendron.org/](http://rhododendron.org/)

NanOOSE Bay Garden Club:  
[nanoosegardenclub.ca/](http://nanoosegardenclub.ca/)

Linda Gilkeson’s website:  
[lindagilkeson.ca/](http://lindagilkeson.ca/)

Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:  
[virags.com](http://virags.com)

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society:  
[nanaimorhodos.ca](http://nanaimorhodos.ca)

Linda Chalker-Scott  
<https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>



## CVRS Library/Book Club News

### Three Titles to Note:

- ***The Cultivation of Rhododendrons*:** This book is still missing from the Library. Records indicate that the book was purchased, received by the club, but never processed into the CVRS Library. (Cox's 1994)

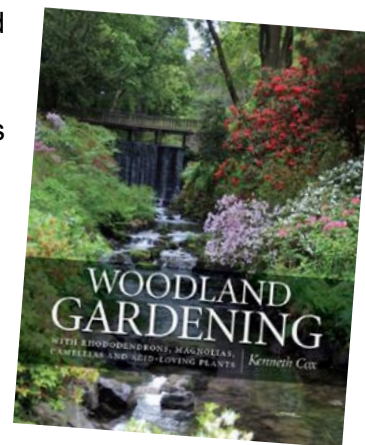
**We kindly request that members examine their libraries to see whether this book may inadvertently have become lost in their personal libraries.**

- ***In Veronica's Garden*:** Al and Sandy Campbell have generously donated this book to the CVRS Library.
- ***Woodland Gardens*,** Cox 2018: The CVRS is planning to purchase this book for the library.

### Book Reviews

'For those of us who appreciate visits to woodland gardens, this large-format book will become our bible.....the high quality photographs...transport you round the world, looking at remarkable gardens....'

Jim Gardiner, *RHS Garden*, June 2018



## The Rhododendron Species Foundation Spring 2019 Sale

The spring 2019 catalogue is available on the RSF website: <https://rhodygarden.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2019-Spring-Catalog.pdf>

**However, a major change from the past is that the plants will not be delivered to Canada this time;** Canadian orders must be picked up in Federal Way on April 27<sup>th</sup>:

<https://rhodygarden.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2019-Spring-Order-Form-INT.pdf>

**First day of allocation is January 16.**

The pickup date coincides with the 2019 Rhododendron Species Symposium in Federal Way Washington. Details of the symposium program are available on the Rhododendron Species foundation website.

**UNFORTUNATELY, THIS EVENT TAKES PLACE ON THE SAME WEEKEND AS THE CVRS GARDEN SALE.**

For this reason it would be most appreciated if any individuals from our club who were planning to travel to the Rhododendron Species Symposium and might be willing to transport ordered plants for others could let the Executive know so that information could be shared with other members planning to volunteer at the Garden Fair.



## 2018-19 Executive

President: Barrie Agar  
[barrie.agar@shaw.ca](mailto:barrie.agar@shaw.ca) (250) 748-2308

Vice President: Ali Morris

Past President:

Secretary: Verna Buhler  
[Vlbuhler@shaw.ca](mailto:Vlbuhler@shaw.ca) 250-748-8889

Treasurer: Elaine Kitchen  
[y1880@yahoo.ca](mailto:y1880@yahoo.ca) 250-746-6419

Membership Chair: David Annis

Directors at Large:  
Diane Allen, Alan Campbell, Ron Martin,  
Elizabeth Zoffman

## Convenors

Sunshine: Mary Gale

Tea: Judeen Hendricksen

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liaison: Alan Campbell

Library: Verna Buhler

Membership Recruitment: Peter Lewis

Program Committee Co-ordinator: Alan Campbell

History: Ian Efford

Garden Tours/Trips: Al Murray

CV Garden Fair: The Team

Facility Liaison: Roy Elvins

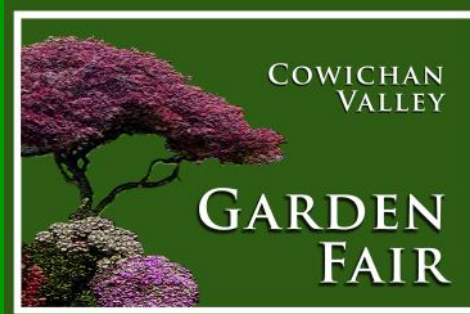
Christmas Party: The Team



## Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American  
Rhododendron Society  
P.O. Box 904  
Duncan, British Columbia  
V9L 3Y2

<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>



April 27, 2019; 10 am - 2 pm

<http://cowichanvalleygardenfair.com>



[www.facebook.com/  
CowichanValleyGardenFair](http://www.facebook.com/CowichanValleyGardenFair)

Newsletter design/format & website edits by  
Mary-Lynn Boxem ([mlboxem77@gmail.com](mailto:mlboxem77@gmail.com))  
ML Media Design [www.mlmediadesign.ca](http://www.mlmediadesign.ca)